

Regional Trails Needs Report and Equity and Social Justice Initiative

In support of the King County Equity and Social Justice Initiative, DNRP performed an equity assessment for its major lines of business, which included access to the Regional Trail System. The assessment utilized Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to map how selected services and facilities relate to basic demographic conditions.

This comparison helps identify and address the relative fairness in distribution of benefits and burdens across our service areas, with the goal of reducing racial or income-based inequity associated with facilities and programs.

Having this basic, screening-level understanding of how our service portfolio impacts residents of various demographic backgrounds provides a useful perspective for more detailed assessments, if needed. When considering capital improvements, outreach or planning decisions, these maps help assess the potential impacts of new actions as they relate to current service levels and spatial demographics.

Using GIS maps, DNRP has identified relationships between basic demographic characteristics and selected outcomes, including:

- The proximity of residents of various race and income levels to potentially undesirable facilities (e.g. transfer stations, pump stations);
- The proximity of residents of various race and income levels to desirable facilities (e.g. regional trails) or services; and
- The degree that residents of various race and income levels utilize services and/or are impacted by community conditions

Approach

The Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) method for assessing the equity of facility and service distribution includes these steps:

1. Map King County census block groups using six categories of race and income
2. Plot selected DNRP facilities, service levels, and/or impact areas
3. Create facility or program "catchment areas" by buffering appropriate distance from the facility or program location to include the affected areas
4. Identify resident demographics in catchment areas
5. Benefit assessment — Determine demographics of block groups living closer to selected desirable facilities or those receiving higher DNRP services levels
6. Burden assessment — Determine demographics of block groups living closer to selected facilities or receiving lower levels of DNRP services
7. Compare demographics of those in "catchment areas" with countywide averages
8. Summarize and map the findings
9. Identify if degree of disproportionality is significant enough to warrant a program response

Results of Initial Assessment

Analysis of access to the Regional Trail System resulted in the following:

- 1.) Distance to regional trails in relation to minority demographics showed median distances to regional trails ranging relatively close at between 0.89 miles to 1.21 miles for all Census Block Groups.
- 2.) Distance to Regional Trail in relation to Income Demographics showed median distances to regional trails of between .92 miles and 1.17 miles.
- 3.) Relationship of distribution of regional trails was mapped to show relationship of health disparities as portrayed by death by diabetes and heart disease, obesity, and degree of physical activity. These maps show a --- geographical distribution of regional trails throughout the county, with some disparity in areas within some cities.

Effect on Regional Trails Needs Report

The result of this analysis did not indicate the need for changes to the Regional Trail Needs Report. It was found that the minor level of disparity in access to the regional trails can be best addressed by focusing on completing the Regional Trail System and distributing its benefits through linkages with local and community trails to provide increased access to the system. The County will work as a facilitator and/or partner among the multiple jurisdictions that need better access to the Trail System.

An example of these efforts is inclusion of funding in the 2009 Parks Capital Budget to work with cities in the southwest portion of the county to pursue a Lake to Sound Trail Corridor for better access to the regional trail system for both transportation and recreation opportunities.